

How to deal with unauthorized overtime

Q. We have a “no overtime without approval” policy. If employees put down overtime on their time sheets, do we have to pay it if the extra time isn’t approved? —A.W., Oregon

A. The short answer is “yes.” You have to pay any overtime worked, even if the overtime was not requested or approved in advance. But that doesn’t mean you’re powerless. It’s smart to include a provision in your overtime policy that says employees can be disciplined for working unapproved overtime. In fact, the Labor Department looks for such language if you end up with a claim contesting overtime.

When you catch employees working unapproved overtime, advise them of your policy and counsel them about the need for approval ... and the consequences of not getting it.